

## **Federal Update**

### **August 1, 2006**

#### **Congress Passes Perkins Reauthorization Bill**

On July 20, conferees reached an agreement to reauthorize the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act for six years. The Perkins program had been eliminated in **President Bush's** FY2007 budget request. Conferees accepted the modern terminology of "Career and Technical Education," and the agreement maintained separate funding streams for the Tech Prep program, which provides skills training through collaboration between vocational programs and two- and four-year institutions. This issue had been a point of contention in pre-conference negotiations. The agreement also would allow states to spend up to five percent of their funds on administrative costs, and state leadership will remain at 10 percent. The full Senate confirmed the Perkins conference report on Wednesday of last week and the House approved it late Friday. The bill has been sent to the President. You may view the full conference report at [http://www.rules.house.gov/109\\_2nd/text/s250/s250\\_conf\\_rept.pdf](http://www.rules.house.gov/109_2nd/text/s250/s250_conf_rept.pdf).

**Brittney McCarthy** in the Office of Congresswoman **Betty McCollum** has prepared a summary of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006. We are sharing it below for your review.

**Name Change:** The Conference Report updates the name of the Act and authorized programs from "Vocational Education" to "Career and Technical Education."

**Authorization Level:** The Conference Report authorizes such sums through FY2012.

**Formula:** The Conference Report adjusts the federal-to-state formula to better respond to population growth and it allows for an increase in funding to small states. The new formula is triggered when appropriations rise above FY2006 funding levels.

**Structure:** The Conference Report, unlike the House bill, does not consolidate the Basic State Grant and the Tech-Prep program. Instead, the Conference Report retains the separate authorization in current law and gives states the choice of continuing a Tech Prep Program.

**State Administration:** The Conference Report, unlike the House bill, retains the ability of states to use five percent of their allocation for administrative activities such as planning, evaluation and coordination.

**Performance Indicators:** The Conference Report establishes separate performance indicators for secondary and post-secondary programs. Secondary program indicators include: academic achievement; technical skill proficiency; graduation rates; receipt of secondary school diploma; GED; and alternative diplomas; placement in post-secondary education or employment placement; and student participation in training in non-traditional fields. Post-secondary program indicators include: technical skill proficiency; attainment of technical credentials; retention in post-secondary or transfer to baccalaureate program; placement in employment; and student participation in training in non-traditional fields. The Conference Report now requires

that states use the same measures of performance for students who participate in the Tech-Prep program and non-Tech Prep career and technical students. State and local programs must make program performance information publicly available and must disaggregate data by race, gender, limited English proficiency status, disability, and special population status.

**Accountability:** The Conference Report includes new accountability measures aimed at driving program improvement. The Conference Report requires career and technical education programs to develop improvement plans to address deficiencies in performance. If these improvement plans are not carried out or if programs fail to meet 90 percent of one or more of the same performance indicators for three consecutive years, funds may be withheld.

**Private School Participation:** The Conference Report provides public schools with the discretion to allow private school students to participate in career and technical education programs. It maintains current law, which allows teachers from private schools to participate in professional development opportunities.

**Career and Technical Programs of Study:** The Conference Report requires states to develop and offer Career and Technical Programs of Study that guide students on the core curriculum necessary to achieve proficiency in career and technical education programs. Similar to the concept of “Career Pathways,” Career and Technical Programs of Study incorporate both secondary and postsecondary education elements and must lead to an industry-recognized credential or certificate at the postsecondary level, or an associate or baccalaureate degree.

**Math, Science, and Technology:** The Conference Report increases the role of math, science and technology in career and technical education programs and encourages the expanded use of technology by teachers and faculty.

**Professional Development:** The Conference Report strengthens professional development programs, such as teacher recruitment and retention, and promotes joint professional development opportunities with academic staff for career and technical education teachers, administrators and career and guidance counselors.

**Graduation and Career Plans:** The Conference Report includes new language that allows secondary programs to design graduation and career plans as tools to help students focus on future goals and guide educational decisions critical to graduation, participation in post-secondary education or entry into a high-skill, high-wage, high-demand career.

**Non-Traditional Careers/Special Populations:** The Conference Report continues support for increasing access to programs that train students for non-traditional careers and support for increasing access for students with disabilities, single and pregnant teens, and displaced homemakers.

**Other new state and local uses of funds:** Technical Assessments; support for career clusters, career academies and distance education, and entrepreneurship education.

## **PELL Grant Would Remain Flat Under Senate Spending Bill**

On July 20, the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee approved the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education spending bill. The Senate bill keeps the Pell Grant at its current 2006 level of \$4,050, whereas the House Appropriations Committee has proposed a \$100 increase to the Pell Grant in its version of the spending bill.

The Senate bill does, however, restore funds for several education programs that **President Bush** had proposed eliminating in his budget for FY2007. Among the programs that would be spared are Upward Bound and Talent Search, two of the TRIO college-preparation programs for disadvantaged students; and Gear Up, another college-preparation program, which focuses on financially needy middle-school students. Spending for all three programs would remain the same as in the current fiscal year. A vote by the House is likely to occur in September, and conference and final passage of the appropriations bill is not expected until after the November elections.

## **Commission on the Future of Higher Education Releases Revised Report**

A revised draft report released last week by the Commission on the Future of Higher Education contains less criticism of the nation's colleges than did the controversial first draft, issued two weeks ago. The new version of the report incorporates revisions suggested by members of the 19-member panel and omits some of the more controversial provisions included in the original draft, including a sentence that blamed rising college costs on institutions' failure "to take aggressive steps to improve institutional efficiency and productivity." Instead, the new version acknowledges that cuts in state support have contributed to rising tuitions.

Also, included in the report at commission members' request is a section on the importance of preparing students to compete in the global economy, along with new statistics on the underrepresentation of minorities and low-income students in higher education. The commission's chairman, **Charles Miller**, said that he "expected that the report will continue to undergo changes and edits over the course of our discussions." The commission is expected to hold a final public meeting on Aug. 10. The full report can be found at <http://www.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/hiedfuture/reports/0714-draft.pdf>.

## **Academic Competitiveness Grant Program for the 2006-2007 School Year**

The U.S. Department of Education has recognized Minnesota's proposal for an alternative rigorous secondary school program of study for the new Academic Competitiveness Grant (ACG) Program for the 2006-2007 school year. Starting in July, the U.S. Department of Education began to notify potentially eligible students by email or letter that they may be eligible for an Academic Competitiveness Grant, which was created by the Higher Education Reconciliation Act of 2005.

The purpose of the grant is to encourage students to take more challenging courses in high school, which researchers claim will make success in college more likely, and to pursue college majors in high demand areas, such as science, mathematics, technology, engineering and critical

foreign languages in the global economy. Academic Competitiveness Grants will be available to students for their first and second academic years of college. Students will be directed to submit additional information to the department demonstrating their eligibility. College financial aid offices will be notified and, after verifying the student's eligibility will award and disburse the grants. Students need to be enrolled full-time and be receiving a Pell Grant. Participation in a rigorous secondary school program of study may qualify a postsecondary student to receive an ACG. The options for eligibility for students in Minnesota for the 2006-2007 school year are:

- **A set of courses similar to the State Scholars Initiative.** This program of study requires passing grades in the following:
  - Four years of English;
  - Three years of math (including algebra I and a higher level course such as algebra II, geometry, or data analysis and statistics);
  - Three years of science (including at least two courses from biology, chemistry or physics);
  - Three years of social studies; and
  - One year of a foreign language.
  
- **Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses and test scores.** This program requires a minimum of two Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses in high school and a minimum passing score on the exams for those classes. Students must score 3 or higher on AP exams and 4 or higher on IB exams.
  
- **Minnesota Coursework Requirements.** This program requires:
  - Four years of language arts;
  - Three years of math, including one year each of geometry and two years of algebra, one of which is intermediate or advanced algebra;
  - Three years of science, including one year each of a biological and physical science;
  - Three years of social studies; and
  - Two years of a single foreign language.